(https://reclaimthenet.org)

Subscribe
(https://reclaimthenet.org/join)

Fight censorship and surveillance. Reclaim your digital freedom.

Get news updates, features, and alternative tech explorations to defend your digital rights.

Enter your email address

Subscribe

October 27, 2025 11:55 AM ET

Australia's eSafety Chief Pressures Big Tech and AI Firms on Verification, Age Checks

Inman Grant's campaign now reaches from TikTok feeds to AI chatrooms, pulling the entire digital ecosystem into her jurisdiction.

Dan Frieth(https://reclaimthenet.org/author/dan-frieth)

Share

Stand against censorship and surveillance, join Reclaim The Net.
(https://reclaimthenet.org/go/pt)

Australia's top online regulator, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, is intensifying her push to reshape speech in the digital world.

Her office has formally warned major social platforms and several AI chatbot companies that they could soon be forced to comply with far-reaching new age verification (https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions) and "online safety" requirements that many see as expanding government control over online communication.

The warnings are part of the government's effort to enforce the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 (https://reclaimthenet.org/bill-gates-backs-australia-social-media-age-ban-digital-control), which would bar Australians under 16 from creating social media accounts.

Letters sent to Meta, TikTok, Snapchat, X, and YouTube make it clear that each company is expected to fall under the scope of the new law.

The Commissioner's preliminary assessment is that these services exist mainly for "online social interaction," which brings them within the definition of social media platforms and subjects them to strict age verification and child protection obligations.

Not all of the companies accept that classification. Snapchat claims to be primarily a messaging platform similar to WhatsApp, while YouTube has opposed losing its original exemption.

At this stage, only services with a clear focus on messaging or education, such as WhatsApp, Messenger, YouTube Kids, and Google Classroom, remain excluded from the Commissioner's oversight.

More: Australia Wants To See Your Papers Before You Press Play (https://reclaimthenet.org/australia-wants-to-see-your-papers-before-you-press-play)

Inman Grant has promised to maintain a "dynamic list" of which platforms are covered, explaining that it will be updated as services change or as young users move to other online spaces.

"Over the coming weeks, eSafety will have more to say about the platforms it considers must comply with the minimum age obligations," the agency said in a statement, hinting that additional services, including OpenAI's Sora, could be added.

At the same time, the Commissioner has turned her attention to AI chatbot developers.

Her office has issued legal notices to Character Technologies, Inc. (character.ai), Glimpse.AI (Nomi), Chai Research Corp (Chai), and Chub AI Inc. (Chub.ai), ordering them to explain how they are protecting minors from "a range of harms, including sexually explicit conversations and images and suicidal ideation and self-harm."

The companies are being asked to demonstrate how they meet the Basic Online Safety Expectations (BOSE), a framework established under the Online Safety Act that goes far beyond ordinary child-safety standards.

BOSE authorizes the government to demand detailed reports from digital service providers and to penalize those that fail to comply.

Among its requirements are broad directives that "encrypted services, anonymous accounts, generative artificial intelligence (AI) and recommender systems can be used safely," and that "harmful material and activity is minimized."

While framed as promoting safety, these rules give the Commissioner wide discretion to define what counts as acceptable online behavior.

BOSE lists various "reasonable steps" that companies may take, such as user verification, partnerships with other platforms to curb what regulators describe as "pile-on attacks," and the adoption of "age assurance mechanisms."

Companies that fail to cooperate risk serious financial penalties. Ignoring a reporting notice could result in court proceedings and daily fines of up to 825,000 Australian dollars (about 537,000 USD).

Violating a compliance direction could bring civil penalties of up to 49.5 million AUD. "We are asking them about what measures they have in place to protect children from these very serious harms," Inman Grant said.

"I do not want Australian children and young people serving as casualties of powerful technologies thrust onto the market without guardrails and without regard for their safety and wellbeing."

Julie Inman Grant, Australia's eSafety Commissioner, has become one of the most controversial figures in the country's online landscape.

Once presented as a digital safety advocate, she now oversees an agency with sweeping authority to police online speech, demand content removal, and enforce mandatory age verification under the guise of "protecting children."

It was amid this pressure that Inman Grant sought to shape the political narrative. In late August, she sent a five-page letter to shadow communications minister Melissa McIntosh, attempting to head off an inquiry and defend her record (https://reclaimthenet.org/esafety-chief-inman-grant-swayed-coalition).

The letter, released through freedom of information laws, shows a Commissioner determined to protect her authority as questions about her expanding control over online speech intensify.

If you're tired of censorship and surveillance, join Reclaim The Net. (https://reclaimthenet.org/go/pb)

Read Next

Visa Launches Biometric Digital Identity Initiative For Payments (https://reclaimthenet.org/visa-launches-biometric-digital-identity-initiative-for-payments)

Read the story → (https://reclaimthenet.org/visa-launches-biometric-digital-identity-initiative-for-payments)

Fight censorship and surveillance. Reclaim your digital freedom.

Get news updates, features, and alternative tech explorations to defend your digital rights.

Enter your email address

Subscribe

More you should know:

(https://reclaimthenet.org/how-amazon-turned-your-neighborhood-into-a-police-database)

How Amazon Turned Your Neighborhood Into a Police Database (https://reclaimthenet.org/how-amazon-turned-your-neighborhood-into-a-police-database)

(https://reclaimthenet.org/ditching-google-practical-self-hosted-replacements)

Ditching Google: Practical Self-Hosted Replacements (https://reclaimthenet.org/ditching-google-practical-self-hosted-replacements)

(https://reclaimthenet.org/how-anonymized-data-can-be-a-myth)

The Illusion of Anonymized Data (https://reclaimthenet.org/how-anonymized-data-can-be-a-myth)

(https://reclaimthenet.org/the-secret-life-of-your-utility-bill)

The Secret Life of Your Utility Bill (https://reclaimthenet.org/the-secret-life-of-your-utility-bill)

Login (https://members.reclaimthenet.org/auth/sign_in?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fl.facebook.com%2F)
Home(https://reclaimthenet.org)
Shop(https://shop.reclaimthenet.org/)
Donate (https://donorbox.org/reclaim-the-net)

Donate(https://reclaimthenet.org/donate-Crypto cryptocurrency)

Contact(https://reclaimthenet.org/contact)

RSS(https://reclaimthenet.org/feed)

Privacy(https://reclaimthenet.org/privacy)

(https://shop.reclaimthenet.org/)

Donate
(https://donorbox.org/reclaim-the-net)